



December 22, 2000

NLC Journal

The National Leadership Council (NLC) is composed of the Director, Deputy Directors, Associate Directors and Regional Directors. It meets quarterly to consult on major policy and program issues confronting the organization. It is staffed by the WASO Office of Policy with the active support of managers in the parks, program areas and regional offices.

The NLC Journal is a report from the National Leadership Council to all National Park Service employees. Beginning in January of 2001, it will be issued immediately after every NLC meeting. It will be distributed electronically, posted on the Morning Report and made available in hard copy Servicewide.

The main business before the National Leadership Council in its meeting on November 30 and December 1 in Washington, D.C., was to assess the National Park Service's Discovery 2000 General Conference, held in St. Louis this past September. This first-of-its-kind national conference brought together over 1200 Park Service personnel and representatives of NPS partnership organizations to look far into the future and develop a vision of the Park Service's 21st Century role in American life. For a full week, conferees heard from scholars and experts in the relevant disciplines and met in dialogue sessions to examine the most fundamental aspects of NPS work.

Discovery 2000 was an enormous success. Participants thought anew about park purposes and National Park Service possibilities and prospects in the new century. Discussions were animated by passion for the organization's preservation mission, a conviction that this purpose is growing in importance, and that it may become critical in the new century. Many participants found the conference experience deeply moving.

A vision of the future is emerging

We foresee a National Park Service that is a world environmental leader, a preeminent resource management agency that demonstrates in every park and program, in every aspect of its work, a core commitment to sustain and to restore the natural systems of the planet. The Service actively encourages and sponsors scientific research and study in every park and identifies the increase and the sharing of ecological knowledge as an organizational purpose. The National Park Service of the 21st Century is a principal leader of national and global efforts to preserve biodiversity.

We envision a national park system that is revered as one of America's premier educational institutions, where people and organizations collaborate on teaching and learning about the interconnections of human culture and nature, the systems and principles of democracy, and the values of America's diverse cultural heritage. Parks are an integral part of the nation's educational system, providing unique and powerful individual learning experiences that shape basic comprehension and personal values. Within the Park Service, education is a primary organizational purpose, essential to achieve our mission.

We see a National Park Service that is the best it can be in everything it does. It sets goals of quality performance that are higher than at present, and raises the goals ever higher as progress and improvements are achieved. It is an organization in which every employee, irrespective of occupational category, organizational, or geographic location, has the opportunity to develop their fullest potential and where their contributions to the mission of the Service are recognized and valued. It is an organization that avoids the kind of hierarchy that makes one person seem less important than another.

Fundamental to accomplishing organizational goals is our success in joining with and respecting others who share in the greater common mission to preserve resources and communicate resource values to the public. The Service is thoroughly oriented toward helping them accomplish their work and looks for every opportunity to learn from and to teach others. The Service uses the power of its traditions of stewardship and public service and its popularity with the public to benefit everyone engaged in the greater preservation mission.

Leadership is the foundation on which this vision can be realized

The National Leadership Council is enthusiastic about the potential of the National Park Service and inspired by the future that many believe is possible. Leadership of the service, within the service, and by the service creates circumstances and environments in which others can succeed.

National Leadership Council

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The National Leadership Council believes the National Park Service must think beyond traditional concepts of leadership—becoming keenly aware of the larger systems in which parks and programs operate. The Service must think afresh about the roles of leadership, about what it means to be an “environmental leader” when working among partners who have stewardship responsibilities of their own. Leadership derives from quality of service provided by the leader rather than from vested authority vested in the leader.

The National Leadership Council emphasizes that the National Park Service, for all the enormous good that it does, has far to go and much progress to make in order to live up to the vision that is emerging from Discovery 2000.

Efforts underway

The National Leadership Council believes that important efforts are already underway and programs in place to help the organization meet 21st Century challenges:

- The National Park System Advisory Board is developing for the Director, new Administration and the public a report on the future of national parks. The report, which will be delivered in the spring, is being prepared in collaboration with the National Geographic Society. It is expected to affirm basic park mandates and speak to organizational and policy directions for the new century.
- The NPS Strategic Plan identifies central mission goals and actions needed to accomplish those goals. The Natural Resource Challenge, in its second year of funding, is building new capacity for science-based resources management. The just-completed Cultural Resource Challenge, which outlines strategies to strengthen cultural resource stewardship, will be submitted for funding in the new fiscal year. The NPS Interpretive Plan “Connecting Parks to People” is contributing to a growing emphasis on education. The Diversity Action Plan and the developing Workforce Challenge address commitments to broaden and professionalize the workforce.

Next steps

The National Leadership Council is committed to continue the dialogue about new century National Park Service roles that Discovery 2000 inspired. Discovery 2000-type dialogue and scenario-planning techniques will be incorporated into National Leadership Council other NPS meetings. An NLC meeting is scheduled in Washington—on January 17 and 18, 2001—to identify specific steps, to expand deliberations and to consider long-term strategies. The NLC believes that the National Park Service must enhance its capacity to think strategically, and the principal purpose of the NLC is to lead and encourage the organization in this regard. The NLC will explore opportunities to work with experts in the fields of management and organizational change to strengthen itself as a leadership body.

Appreciation

The National Leadership Council acknowledges and expresses heartfelt appreciation to all of you, the people who *are* the National Park Service, for your hard work and dedication. You are the most important and valuable resource available to this great organization. We ask that you join with us in imagining the future, to develop your own personal vision, strategic goals, and plans, and to begin aligning them and your everyday actions with the vision that is emerging for the National Park Service. The promise in pursuing this vision is that together we can—and will—build an organization that more successfully pursues its mission and affects the lives of people for the better.

Other Meeting Items

- The NLC is placing high priority on addressing issues raised in the report of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and will expedite the NPS response using the approach of an incident command team. Superintendents who manage law enforcement programs will attend law enforcement training. The NLC compliments the IACP taskforce for exceptional work.
- The NLC received the final draft of the Women in Law Enforcement Task Force Report and expressed concerns about the problems it identified. The NLC is currently reviewing the draft and will be working with the task force to prioritize the action recommendations so that corrective measures can be taken expeditiously.
- The NLC affirmed its support for a program to bring NPS structural fire safety into compliance with National Fire Protection Association codes and standards, Occupational Safety and Health Administration rules and regulations, and National Park Service policy. A reprogramming is being considered to support structural fire safety needs.
- The NLC discussed the implications of actions by the outgoing 106th Congress that authorized almost \$90 million worth of grants from National Park Service appropriations to support activities for which the NPS has no administrative or management responsibilities. When actual appropriations for these purposes are made, they result in fewer dollars being available to support priorities identified by the NPS in line-item construction programs, because these “pass-through” funds count against NPS appropriations ceilings. The NPS will continue to oppose these types of authorizations. The NLC encourages all employees to consider the consequences of proposals for new park areas and programs, as well as pass-through grants, on existing base capabilities.

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